



BILLING CODE 6717-01-P

FEDERAL ENERGY REGULATORY COMMISSION

Tres Palacios Gas Storage, L.L.C.

Docket No. CP12-36-000

NOTICE OF INTENT TO PREPARE AN
ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT FOR THE PROPOSED
COPANO PLANT INTERCONNECT PROJECT
AND
REQUEST FOR COMMENTS ON ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

The staff of the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC or Commission) will prepare an environmental assessment (EA) that will discuss the environmental affects of the Copano Plant Interconnect Project (Project) proposed by Tres Palacios Gas Storage, L.L.C. (TPGS) in Colorado and Wharton Counties, Texas. The Commission will use this EA in its decision-making process to determine whether the Project is in the public convenience and necessity.

This notice announces the opening of the scoping process the Commission will use to gather input from the public and interested agencies on the Project. Your input will help the Commission staff determine what issues need to be evaluated in the EA. Please note that the **scoping period will close on February 29, 2012.**

You may submit comments in written form. Further details on how to submit written comments are in the Public Participation section of this notice.

This notice is being sent to the Commission's current environmental mailing list for this Project. State and local government representatives should notify their constituents of this proposed Project and encourage them to comment on their areas of concern.

If you are a landowner receiving this notice, a pipeline company representative may contact you about the acquisition of an easement to construct, operate, and maintain the proposed facilities. The company would seek to negotiate a mutually acceptable agreement. However, if the Commission approves the project, that approval conveys with it the right of eminent domain. Therefore, if easement negotiations fail to produce an agreement, the pipeline company could initiate condemnation proceedings where compensation would be determined in accordance with state law.

TPGS provided landowners with a fact sheet prepared by the FERC entitled “An Interstate Natural Gas Facility on My Land? What Do I Need To Know?” This fact sheet addresses a number of typically-asked questions, including the use of eminent domain and how to participate in the Commission’s proceedings. It is also available for viewing on the FERC website (www.ferc.gov).

Summary of the Proposed Project

TPGS plans to construct, own, and operate approximately 19.7 miles of 24-inch diameter pipeline, appurtenances, and one interconnect and metering station that connects the existing Copano Energy Houston Central Plant in Colorado County, Texas to TPGS' existing pipeline system in Wharton County, Texas. The Copano Energy Houston Central Plant, which processes natural gas produced from Eagle Ford Shale in southern Texas, would send refined natural gas to TPGS storage and wheeling facilities where it would either be sent to the ten interstate and intrastate pipeline with which TPGS interconnects, or be stored in TPGS facilities for later delivery to any of these pipelines for transportation to markets in the United States and Mexico.

The general location of the Project facilities is shown in Appendix 1.¹

Land Requirements for Construction

Construction of the Project would impact a total of approximately 227.4 acres, including lands affected for the pipeline construction, additional temporary workspaces and the aboveground interconnect and metering site. Following construction, about 96.4 acres would be maintained for permanent operation of the project’s facilities; the remaining acreage would be restored and allowed to revert to former uses. About 97 percent of the planned pipeline route parallels an existing pipeline right-of-way.

The EA Process

The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requires the Commission to take into account the environmental impacts that could result from an action whenever it considers the issuance of a Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity. The NEPA

¹ The appendices referenced in this notice are not printed in the Federal Register. Copies of appendices were sent to all those receiving this notice in the mail and are available at www.ferc.gov using the link called “eLibrary” or from the Commission’s Public Reference Room, 888 First Street NE, Washington, DC 20426, or call (202) 502-8371. For instructions on connecting to eLibrary, refer to the last page of this notice.

also requires us² to discover and address concerns the public may have about proposals. This process is referred to as “scoping.” The main goal of the scoping process is to focus the analysis in the EA on important environmental issues. By this notice, the Commission requests public comments on the scope of the issues to address in the EA. We will consider all filed comments during the preparation of the EA.

In the EA we will discuss environmental affects that could occur as a result of the construction and operation of the proposed Project, under these general headings:

- geology and soils;
- land use and recreation;
- water resources, fisheries, and wetlands;
- cultural resources;
- vegetation and wildlife;
- air quality and noise; and
- public safety.

We will also evaluate reasonable alternatives to the proposed Project or portions of the Project, and make recommendations on how to lessen or avoid impacts on the various resource areas.

The EA will present our independent analysis of the issues. The EA will be available in the public record through eLibrary (FERC’s records information system, see the Additional Information section of this Notice). To ensure we have the opportunity to consider and address your comments, please carefully follow the instructions in the Public Participation section. Depending on the comments received during the scoping process, we may also publish and distribute the EA to the public for an allotted comment period. Comments on the EA will be considered before we make our recommendations to the Commission.

With this notice, we are asking agencies with jurisdiction by law and/or special expertise with respect to the environmental issues of this project to formally cooperate with us in the preparation of the EA.³ Agencies that would like to request cooperating agency status should follow the instructions for filing comments provided under the Public Participation section of this notice.

² “We”, “us”, and “our” refer to the environmental staff of the Commission’s Office of Energy Projects.

³ The Council on Environmental Quality regulations addressing cooperating agency responsibilities are at Title 40, Code of Federal Regulations, Part 1501.6.

Consultations Under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act

In accordance with the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation's implementing regulations for section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act, we are using this notice to initiate consultation with the Texas State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO), and to solicit their views and those of other government agencies, interested Indian tribes, and the public on the Project's potential effects on historic properties.⁴ We will define the project-specific Area of Potential Effects (APE) in consultation with the SHPO as the Project develops. On natural gas facility projects, the APE at a minimum encompasses all areas subject to ground disturbance (examples include construction right-of-way, contractor/pipe storage yards, compressor stations, and access roads). Our EA for this Project will document our findings on the impacts on historic properties and summarize the status of consultations under section 106.

Public Participation

You can make a difference by providing us with your specific comments or concerns about the Project. Your comments should focus on the potential environmental effects, reasonable alternatives, and measures to avoid or lessen environmental impacts. The more specific your comments, the more useful they will be. To ensure that your comments are timely and properly recorded, please send in your comments so that they will be received in Washington, DC on or before **February 29, 2012**.

For your convenience, there are three methods which you can use to submit your comments to the Commission. In all instances please reference the Project docket number (CP12-36-000) with your submission. The Commission encourages electronic filing of comments and has expert staff available to assist you at (202) 502-8258 or efiling@ferc.gov.

- (1) You may file your comments electronically by using the eComment feature, which is located on the Commission's website at (www.ferc.gov) under the link to [Documents and Filings](#). This is a method for interested persons to submit brief, text-only comments on a project;
- (2) You may file your comments electronically by using the eFiling feature, which is located on the Commission's website at (www.ferc.gov) under the link to [Documents and Filings](#). With eFiling you can provide comments in

⁴ The Advisory Council on Historic Preservation's regulations are at Title 36, Code of Federal Regulations, Part 800. Those regulations define historic properties as any prehistoric or historic district, site, building, structure, or object included in or eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places.

a variety of formats by attaching them as a file with your submission. New eFiling users must first create an account by clicking on “eRegister”. You must select the type of filing you are making. If you are filing a comment on a particular project, please select “Comment on a Filing”; or

- (3) You may file a paper copy of your comments by mailing them to the following address:

Kimberly D. Bose, Secretary
Federal Energy Regulatory Commission
888 First Street, NE, Room 1A
Washington, DC 20426

Environmental Mailing List

The environmental mailing list includes federal, state, and local government representatives and agencies; elected officials; environmental and public interest groups; Indian tribes; other interested parties; and local libraries and newspapers. This list also includes all affected landowners (as defined in the Commission’s regulations) who are potential right-of-way grantors, whose property may be used temporarily for Project purposes, or who own homes within certain distances of aboveground facilities, and anyone who submits comments on the Project. We will update the environmental mailing list as the analysis proceeds to ensure that we send the information related to this environmental review to all individuals, organizations, and government entities interested in and/or potentially affected by the proposed Project.

If we publish and distribute the EA, copies will be sent to the environmental mailing list for public review and comment. **If you would prefer to receive a paper copy of the document instead of the CD version or would like to remove your name from the mailing list, please return the attached Information Request (Appendix 2).**

Becoming an Intervenor

In addition to involvement in the EA scoping process, you may want to become an “intervenor”, which is an official party to the Commission’s proceeding. Intervenor play a more formal role in the process and are able to file briefs, appear at hearings, and be heard by the courts if they choose to appeal the Commission’s final ruling. An intervenor formally participates in the proceeding by filing a request to intervene. Instructions for becoming an intervenor are in the User’s Guide under the “e-filing” link on the Commission’s website.

Additional Information

Additional information about the project is available from the Commission's Office of External Affairs, at **(866) 208-FERC** or on the FERC website at www.ferc.gov using the “eLibrary” link. Click on the eLibrary link, click on “General Search” and enter the docket number, excluding the last three digits, in the Docket Number field i.e., CP12-36). Be sure you have selected an appropriate date range. For assistance, please contact FERC Online Support at FercOnlineSupport@ferc.gov or toll free at (866) 208-3676, or for TTY, contact (202) 502-8659. The eLibrary link also provides access to the texts of formal documents issued by the Commission, such as orders, notices, and rulemakings.

In addition, the Commission now offers a free service called eSubscription which allows you to keep track of all formal issuances and submittals in specific dockets. This can reduce the amount of time you spend researching proceedings by automatically providing you with notification of these filings, document summaries and direct links to the documents. Go to www.ferc.gov/esubscribenow.htm.

Finally, public meetings or site visits will be posted on the Commission’s calendar located at www.ferc.gov/EventCalendar/EventsList.aspx along with other related information.

Dated: January 30, 2012

Kimberly D. Bose,
Secretary.

[FR Doc. 2012-2450 Filed 02/02/2012 at 8:45 am; Publication Date: 02/03/2012]